



**Mayor John Kehde**  
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June 18, 2020

Dear Community,

In light of the recent calls for police reforms nationally and the specific inquiries we have been receiving about what we are doing locally, I thought I would put this letter out to the community. Please let me start off with the City understands the concerns and welcomes the opportunity for this dialog. I assure you we will continue to be transparent and remain open to ways we can improve.

With that said, as we have read and reviewed the calls for police reforms I have mixed feelings. I am both proud to say we are way ahead in terms of having in place these “reforms”, but equally astonished to learn how far behind other law enforcement agencies are in some of these areas. When I first saw the terrible videos of George Floyd, I along with our police officers were shocked and appalled. I had to ask like many others, how in the world could this happen. Then of course with my job as Mayor, I had to reassure myself that our Sedalia Police do not allow these types of practices that led to his death. I was not only assured that we do not, but through this review have found many reasons to be proud of our officers and leadership. Suffice it to say, no one is more outraged at the bad tactics that led to George Floyd’s death than our police officers. Your Sedalia Police Officers have not used neck restraints or “choke holds” for decades, and full well understand their duty to intercede when excessive or inappropriate force is being used.

Another area that is evolving on the national level is the push for reporting and reviews of the use of force. We again are already doing, and have been for quite some time, what is being proposed as the standard nationally for all law enforcement. Anytime any level of force is used by any officer, the incident is reviewed by their supervisor, the commander, and then by the Chief of Police. This is not only to ensure that the use of force was appropriate, but is used to develop training around ensuring that all of our officers are on the same page. Our police are very professional and constantly work to be prepared for the many different interactions they have with the public to better protect themselves and the public. Key to this is the training in Crisis Intervention, which is all about recognizing the crisis the individual is going through to allow for proper intervention to deescalate the situation the police were called upon to respond to. We do not believe this is getting enough attention in the national conversation. We again have been quite successful in training our officers in these technics which have proven to save lives. I am proud to say, while they do not get the media headlines (and shouldn’t due to privacy for the victims) our officers have just recently diffused multiple very dangerous situations without injury to themselves or anyone else, including the person threatening harm to others. It is through their training, high moral character, and selflessness to put service above themselves that brought about these heroic outcomes. Setting this as the standard or expectation for our Police Officers and then providing the necessary training is just an important catalyst that facilitates their success.

Due to the absence of direct video of what happened in the death of Hannah Fizer, we have also received inquiries about our use of body cameras. The City Police Department has required body and vehicle cameras for quite some time. Our Sedalia Police have welcomed this technology and have deployed it quite successfully. Likewise, the Sedalia Police have enjoyed the budgetary support from our administration and city council to have these along with many other safeguards in place. We cannot speak for the County budgeting process, but in our case, we can say it was not easy to allocate the funding necessary. However, with the forward thinking of our Police, Administration, Mayor, and City Council, we were able to get it done years before others. Merely having them can help find answers when things go wrong, but we go way beyond this use. In all cases of any use of force, the reports along with the recordings from these cameras are used to review first to make sure the officer did not use more force than absolutely necessary, but then is also evaluated and used in training to make sure all



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our officers employ the best methods. I would also refer you to the Pettis County Sherriff's office for more information on their procedures and equipment.

I could go on providing examples of equipment, training, policies, and procedures our Sedalia City Police Force engages in, aimed at preventing loss of life. However, we know that does not provide the answers we all understandably seek regarding Hannah. Therefore I will leave you with this thought, we grieve with you, including yes our police officers. This happened in our community to one of our own. With that said, we are all waiting for the facts to come out of what happened to cause this tragedy. It is our understanding that the investigation is in the hands of the State Highway Patrol. We like you, hope they can provide some answers soon.

Sincerely,  
Mayor John Kehde  
City of Sedalia